

A LAWCHA ForumLabor, Obama  
and the Economic Crisis

by Joe McCartin (jam6@georgetown.edu) and  
Bob Bussel (bussel@uoregon.edu)

As this newsletter goes to press, U.S. workers and the labor movement stand at a critical juncture. Since our last issue appeared a stunning set of developments unfolded in quick succession. The national economy took a nose dive. Major banks now totter on the brink of insolvency and pray for federal intervention. Consumer confidence has plummeted as unemployment and home foreclosures have spiked. The great contraction has begun to spread around the globe. And, in the midst of all of this, the nation elected and inaugurated its first African American president. Trained in organizing, Barack Obama took office with a more pro-labor outlook and a better record on union issues than any previous U.S. president. In speaking out on behalf of sit-down strikers in Chicago's Republic Windows and Doors factory in December, naming Hilda Solis as his Secretary of Labor, and launching his Middle Class Task Force under the direction of labor economist Jared Bernstein, Obama has already begun to transform politics in ways that create new opportunities for workers and unions.

Yet as President Obama confronts an economic crisis larger than any since Roosevelt faced the Great Depression, his administration has become an arena within which many forces contend for influence, and labor is but one of those. Behind closed doors, conflicts simmer over the terms of the financial stabilization package, the content of the health care reform, the importance of passing the Employee Free Choice Act, and more. Meanwhile, conflicts brew within the labor movement as well. The split between the AFL-CIO and Change to Win has now been complicated by emerging conflicts within such unions as the Service Employees International Union and UNITE-HERE. How can we best make sense of this turbulent, complex, and profoundly important moment? What does our understanding of history teach us? And what is the best way forward for those who hope that labor can emerge from this crisis, as it emerged from the crisis

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Letter from the PresidentLabor and Race:  
Crises Old and New

by Michael Honey (mhoney@u.washington.edu)

During the concert that preceded Barak Obama's inauguration as President, Bruce Springsteen noted that progressives have been praying and preaching and singing "This Land is Your Land" for generations. But when we saw some approximation of that hope becoming an actual reality on January 20—following decades of unrelenting militarism and criminal rip-offs of working people—our collective jaws dropped. Against a Republican campaign of vitriol, fear mongering, and even death threats, the majority of voters chose hope over fear.

Now LAWCHA members are rolling up our collective sleeves to help make the promise of change real. Labor organizing helped democratize America in the Great Depression and New Deal, and it can do so again. Our own modest network of volunteer, unpaid efforts demonstrates that labor historians can make a difference. Our conferences at Duke University in 2007 and Vancouver in 2008 emphasized the need to educate broadly about labor history, to develop our resources and networks, and to take a stand for labor rights (see the box on the Employee Free Choice Act).

Nearly one hundred historians have signed the petition David Brody, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Mike Honey initiated in November, stating, "**We, the undersigned historians, support the Employee Free Choice Act and urge Congress**

**to enact it."** Our special thanks to graduate student Joseph Eugene Hower at Georgetown University. As LAWCHA's liaison to unions in Washington, D.C., Joe keeps track of EFCA activity and maintains "Telling Labor's Story" on our web site LAWCHA.org, under "Civic Engagement." See the EFCA Action Alert on page 3 for how to participate.

Our partnership with the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association last June produced a fine trans-US/Canadian conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, on immigrant, ethnic, and indigenous labor. This year's conference in Chicago highlights the crises facing the urban working class

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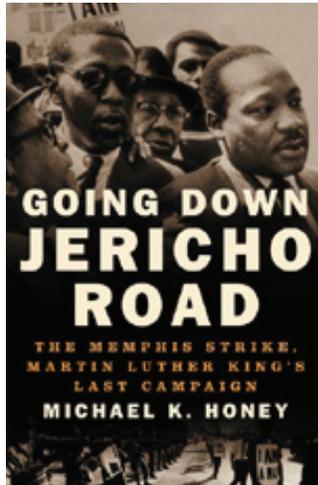
- *A Forum on Teaching*
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## President's Letter

and especially ethnic minorities during today's alarming global economic melt-down. Our theme, "Labor and Race in the City, Crises Old and New," highlights the interconnections between racism and poverty and of movements for labor and civil rights. Coordinators Erik Gellman and Liesl Orenc, with a crew of people in Chicago, and LAWCHA Midwest liaison Lisa Phillips in Indiana, have produced a venue for arts and music as well as the spoken and written word through our partnership with the Fund for Labor Culture.

The need for this conference on the urban crisis came vividly clear to me when I visited Memphis to speak during Black History Month. Stunning poverty lives side by side with a strong black political leadership that lacks the economic base to attack interrelated housing, employment, transportation and educational deficits. In some zip code areas, a majority of people live in poverty, in mostly female-headed households. In Frayser, once a white suburb but now predominantly black, home prices have dropped forty percent, while reverse redlining has set off a wave of foreclosures accentuating drug use and crime among dispossessed youth.

Black and white workers once formed strong industrial unions at Frayser's Harvester plant and in North Memphis at the Firestone plant. But unionized, manufacturing jobs have been replaced by low-wage, non-union jobs in warehouses and service jobs, or no jobs at all. The federal government has taxed Memphis families hundreds of thousands of dollars each to pay for a one trillion dollar occupation of Iraq and two trillion dollars in tax breaks for the already rich. For that money, Memphis and Shelby County could have entirely rebuilt the decaying Memphis school system and created a transportation infrastructure to connect poor communities to jobs. Now, the Republican Party that brought us to this state of neglect and collapse by turning a large budget



surplus into massive deficits and doubling the national debt claims government cannot afford to fund basic needs to make a decent life possible. The Republican betrayal has hit especially hard in the South, where "right to work" laws (which, Martin Luther King noted, "offer no rights and no work") and plant closings have devastated unions and the working class.

Labor movements have turned back corporate greed and arrogance before. Help us examine the historic causes of today's difficulties and to visualize possible solutions. Your ideas, scholarship, and civic engagement are enormously valuable. Through our conferences, our new labor landmarks and memory committee, our work on the Herbert Gutman and Philip Taft labor history prizes, your writing in *Labor*, the fine journal edited by Leon Fink, this newsletter, and other venues, you can help LAWCHA carry on labor history and make it ever more relevant to the present.

Kim Phillips, incoming LAWCHA president in spring 2010, is calling for a focus on organizing the global South at our LAWCHA conference to be held alongside the OAH convention in the District of Columbia in April 2010. This spring, come join us in Seattle and Chicago as we remember and celebrate our history of struggle for a better world. Let our board (which will be meeting in Chicago) know what you are doing in your work and your community, and please suggest ideas for LAWCHA action. This is a great time to be a labor historian, and your input is crucial to our success.

Solidaridad, Mike Honey

### Stay in Touch!

We're going green, moving into the 21st century, saving money, all by using the Internet to stay in touch.

Check out the LAWCHA website ([www.lawcha.org](http://www.lawcha.org)) for op-eds, conference updates, and much more. And send your updated email address to [lawcha@duke.edu](mailto:lawcha@duke.edu)

### Lecture for LAWCHA

#### Next time you receive an honorarium, why not donate it to LAWCHA?

We need your continued financial support to continue our many and growing programs. By sending us your next honorarium (or any other contribution, large or small), you'll be supporting our dissertation and book prizes; you'll be working to make sure that graduate students continue to receive travel grants to attend our conferences; and you'll be helping us to expand our reach to organize new members. And it's tax deductible.

Send your next honorarium to:  
LAWCHA Treasurer Tom Klug, Marygrove College, 8425  
W. McNichols, Detroit, MI 48221

## EFCA Action Alert and Information

Dear LAWCHA Member,

Over eighty historians have signed onto a brief statement initiated in November by LAWCHA members, stating, "We, the undersigned historians, support the Employee Free Choice Act and urge Congress to enact it." If you want to add your name, please contact Joe Hower [jeh67@georgetown.edu](mailto:jeh67@georgetown.edu). We will be publicizing this list shortly.

Now the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) has also created a sign up page for scholars in various disciplines (specifically including historians) in Support of the Employee Free Choice Act. It includes a larger statement of the issues very much in line with what David Brody and other historians have written. We will keep a list of historians who sign it.

But we cannot add your name to the PERI letter even if you have already signed onto our LAWCHA statement; you must do it yourself. So if you would like to add your name to this national list of academic supporters of the workers' right to choose, please go to: <http://www.peri.umass.edu/sefca/>

The debate over EFCA is going to be a big battle in Congress, with opponents claiming EFCA takes away the employee's right to vote. It does not: workers may go through an NLRB secret ballot election if 30 percent choose to sign cards, or they may achieve unionization if more than 50 percent choose to sign cards. EFCA allows more freedom of choice, not less.

Sincerely,  
Michael Honey, LAWCHA President  
Joe Hower, Telling Labor's Story (LAWCHA)



## Official LAWCHA Notice

### **Board of Directors Meeting**

9:00 AM - Noon

Thursday May 28, 2009.

### **Annual Membership Meeting**

at LAWCHA luncheon

Noon-1:45

Friday May 29, 2009.

These meetings will take place  
at the Chicago LAWCHA conference.  
Roosevelt University, May 28-31, 2009.

## LAWCHA Conference Set for Chicago, May 28-31 Roosevelt University, Chicago

LAWCHA's 2009 conference will take place in Chicago on May 28-31, 2009, at Roosevelt University, 430 S. Michigan Avenue. The conference will be organized around a theme made more timely by the emerging economic crisis: "Race, Labor, and the City: Crises Old and New."

Co-sponsored by the Fund for Labor Culture and History (Laborlore Conversations IV), with additional support from the Chicago Center for Working-Class Studies, UNITE-HERE, Chicago Jobs With Justice, and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History-Chicago Branch, the conference will include 35 Panels as well as a number of plenary roundtables and workshops.

Among the highlights will be presentations of the Philip Taft Labor History Book Award and the Herbert G. Gutman Outstanding Dissertation in U.S. Labor History Award, a Saturday night dinner at UNITE Hall, and a Chicago Labor Trail Bus Tour.

Conference registration, housing, and complete program information can be found at

<http://chi-lawcha09.indstate.edu>.

If you have any other questions about the conference, please contact: [chi.lawcha09@gmail.com](mailto:chi.lawcha09@gmail.com)

## Forum, continued: Labor, Obama, and the Economic Crisis

of the 1930s, revived and strengthened by national economic policies that enhance workers' collective voices?

We have invited three acute thinkers to share their views about this moment with us. One, Bill Fletcher, has long played a role as a labor intellectual and progressive voice within the union movement. The other two, Michael Kazin and Jennifer Klein, are among our wisest historians of politics, labor, and political economy. Their views overlap on some points and diverge on others. But, taken together, they direct our attention in useful ways to what Obama, following Martin Luther King, has called the "fierce urgency of now," a phrase that has taken on new meaning in Obama's first months in office.

### Organized labor and Obama: Can critical support work?

by Bill Fletcher, Jr.(papq54@hotmail.com)

When the members of the United Electrical Workers (UE) occupied Republic Windows in Chicago, I did not know what to expect...from anyone. Leaving aside for a moment the outpouring of support that the workers received from around the country, there was a stunning moment when President-elect Obama offered his support of the demands of the workers. Though he did not explicitly support the occupation, his verbal stand with the workers was nearly unprecedented. I could not remember another President taking such a step, certainly in my lifetime. The nearest similarity was President Franklin Roosevelt's famous statement in favor of unionization. At the same time as the Republic Windows battle, however, President-elect Obama was in the midst of assembling his largely center-right cabinet which, with the notable exception of Secretary of Labor nominee, Congresswoman Hilda Solis, is not known for being particularly pro-worker, let alone pro-union.

These two seemingly contradictory signals are illustrative of the complex environment we are entering, demanding a more complex tactical approach than organized labor has largely followed, certainly for the last eight years. Specifically, the Obama administration is not one that came to power through a message aimed specifically at the working class and the poor. Former Senator John Edwards attempted to position himself to play such a role and was hoping to build a progressive populist candidacy as such. Obama, on the other hand, though rhetorically speaking of the need for attention to be focused on "Main Street" rather than "Wall Street," ran a campaign based on building a new consensus, and as such downplayed class issues. He has, however, found himself in the midst of the worst economic downturn since at least 1973-4, and quite possibly since the Great Depression. In fact, the situation has become so bleak that various economists have warned about a possible "GD2", i.e., Great Depression 2. In that situation, and despite the fact that programmatically Obama differed very little from Senator Hil-

lary Clinton, circumstances are forcing him to consider paths that differ dramatically from the Clintonesque route. Whether Obama will take an alternative path, however, will depend less on him and more on what various social movements do and with the quality of the resistance that Obama will encounter from the political Right.

It is worth remembering that when Franklin Roosevelt came to office in 1933, his model for the New Deal was the corporate state of Fascist Italy. There were significant criticisms of Roosevelt's economic program from the political Left and from organized labor. Roosevelt's shift in a more center-Left direction was the result of two main internal factors and one external factor. The two main internal factors were (1)the resistance that the political Right offered to his program of change [largely holding the view that Roosevelt was conceding too much to the Left], and (2)the rise of popular resistance, particularly that found in organized labor. The main external factor was the rise of fascism, particularly after the victory of Nazism.

These points are worth noting because there is often a tendency to view change through the framework of the thinking and impulses of individuals rather than recognize some of the larger forces that help to shape or reshape those same individuals. This is not to suggest a deterministic approach to change, but rather to understand the forces that can be at play.

Thus, in 2009, organized labor, as one social force/movement finds itself confronted with possibilities and challenges. President Obama's impulses are to encourage organizing but to downplay struggle. He sincerely believes that we can all get along and that the role of the political leader is to bring diverse forces together to surmount their differences. What he wishes to ignore is that power never works that way. One need not repeat, ad infinitum, the famous words of Frederick Douglas to remember that power truly does not concede anything without demand. To that should be added, organization. In other words, those in positions of power cannot simply be argued out of their positions in favor of the common good. The oppressed and dispossessed must take their futures into their own hands, organize and mobilize.

What does this mean, then, for the relationship between organized labor and the Obama administration? It means, first and foremost, that the combination of the weakness of organized labor along with contradictory nature of the Obama administration necessitates that organized labor operate very differently than it has traditionally. Contrary to the practice of relying on backroom meetings and Washington, DC-centered lobbying, organized labor must adopt an approach that focuses on building a "class movement". To borrow from A. Philip Randolph, organized labor must truly be the movement of the dispossessed, the despised and the poor, rather than see itself as being the movement of those fortunate to be in a union.

There are a few specific approaches that organized labor can undertake. In following this path, and to the extent to which organized labor follows through, it will find that it be-

gins a process of its own transformation. Taking on the fight for consistent democracy, which is the core of this path, means that one cannot stop at changing what is outside of the union; one will undergo changes oneself. Therefore:

Organized labor must develop a very different electoral base. It needs to do this in conjunction with other working-class organizations through the vehicle of what my colleague Fernando Gapasin and I call “working people’s assemblies.” Locally based movements need to be created that begin the identification of the interests that working people have and move from that identification to a discussion of implementation. The net result of a successful practice of this approach will be a change in the constituency of organized labor in such a way that it is addressing the needs of a class. That will shift the power balance at the electoral level.

Organized labor must not only push the Employee Free Choice Act, but it must do so in conjunction with a broader agenda. This will make it more difficult for Obama and those around him to brush off EFCA as a ‘special interest’ of organized labor. At the same time, organized labor must be prepared for the possibility that EFCA does not pass, and must, develop a Plan B. In the absence of Plan B the danger is one of despair and disengagement.

Organized labor must emphasize those components of the Obama agenda that have yet to be accomplished. In other words, while there will be differences with the Administration, it is critical to emphasize the need for the Administration to fulfill the promises that it made to the people of the USA.

Organized labor cannot be afraid to offer criticism when there are significant differences. Organized labor cannot afford to fall into the lap-dog role it practiced under President Clinton when there would be significant areas of disagreement but there was a certain reluctance to speak out. This does not mean that unions should publicly express every disagreement that they have. It does mean that those areas where there is significant difference should be flagged. It will be critically important for workers to understand that they have a movement that is not an extension of a President, but rather a movement that extends its support--when warranted--to the President.

It is precisely because a new approach may bring forward internal transformation that many leaders in organized labor may be reluctant to change their modus operandi. Despite the fact that a mark of insanity is doing the same thing over and again and expecting different results, many leaders in organized labor remain comfortable with a particular means of operating. The global and domestic crises faced by the working class should render such old approaches defunct, though this does not mean that they will not be practiced in either case. To engage the Obama administration in a new way may ultimately necessitate a very different practice of unionism and a different sort of union leadership.

## But He Needs a Movement

by Michael Kazin

Just months into his tenure, Barack Obama already appears to be the most pro-labor president in U.S. history. He has promised to lobby Congress to pass the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). He appointed a Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, whose parents were active unionists and who was a rock-solid advocate for labor causes both in the California Assembly and the House of Representatives. In several speeches, Obama has made his backing for aggressive unions explicit. Last December, he endorsed the sit-in by laid-off workers at a Chicago window company. And soon after being inaugurated, when he formed a task force to lift more Americans into the middle class, the president announced, “I do not view the labor movement as part of the problem, to me it’s part of the solution.” No other president – including FDR and JFK whose memories are revered in most labor circles – ever spoke of unions in such warmly supportive terms.

But sadly, none of this may matter. Although labor funds and volunteers helped Obama capture such key states as Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania last fall, they have since demonstrated neither the skill of a well-led interest group nor the energy of a social movement that can take advantage of a splendid opportunity.

Labor has done a poor job promoting itself and its top legislative priority. For all its importance, the campaign for

EFCA has been all but invisible to anyone who doesn’t frequent liberal websites. Where are the public hearings that feature workers fired for organizing? The clever demonstrations by union supporters? The ads by celebrities who care as much about card-check as saving the rain forests? The articulate spokespeople who can grab the attention of Jon Stewart, Rachel Maddow, and David Gregory? I suspect few Americans who are not labor activists – or employers and their publicists – even know what EFCA is.

When and if they find out, many will question why the bill replaces the injustice of a delayed Labor Board election with no election at all. There may be a crisp, convincing way to explain this apparent contradiction, although none, to my knowledge, has yet been made. But wouldn’t it be easier to alter the measure to require a vote within a week after cards are submitted? Otherwise, I fear the charge that union “bosses” want to scuttle democracy will turn the whole effort into ashes.

Of course, labor’s internal troubles would have prevented even a brilliant publicity campaign from getting through. Since the sit-in at Republic Window (the purpose of which was to secure severance pay, not to save workers’ jobs), the only labor stories highlighted by the national media have been the nasty divisions embroiling SEIU and UNITE-HERE, two of the largest and most progressive organizations in the country. This may be one reason why unions did not play a prominent role in the February debates over the massive stimulus bill or the bank bailout, at a time when a push from the left was urgently needed to counter the Hooverite pressure from

conservatives and the cuts demanded by moderates. John Judis reported in *The New Republic* that Americans United for Change, backed by AFSCME, “even ran ads thanking Susan Collins, Olympia Snowe, Ben Nelson, and Arlen Specter for agreeing to back the stimulus bill that they had significantly weakened.”

Part of the problem is that labor activists seem unable to play the inside and outside games simultaneously, as any successful movement must do. Workplace radicals disdain the task of befriending the powerful but are unable to mount organizing campaigns or mass actions that could put pressure on Congress, state officials, and major anti-union employers. On the other hand, both national federations appear to be so tightly focused on preserving their connections with Obama and his political allies that they are unwilling or unable to make a strong case for themselves. At times, making that argument will require them to criticize their friends in power.

Fortunately, the current political environment should give labor people the time and space to improve their performance. The debacle that was the Bush administration and the deep recession have made corporate executives less popular than at any time since the 1930s. In poll after poll, a majority of Americans say they are favorable to unions, and large numbers of workers would like to join a union, if that choice became available. But neither the passive sympathies of the public nor the support of the man in the White House will lift labor’s fortunes unless its partisans can shed habits acquired during the long years of decline.

## Labor and the Obama Era

by Jennifer Klein ([jennifer.klein@yale.edu](mailto:jennifer.klein@yale.edu))

On a nuts-and-bolts level, it’s clear what the political agenda of the labor movement is in the new political era: restoring the right to organize, pushing for some broader, yet vaguely defined, form of publicly subsidized health insurance, constructing fairer immigration policy, and revisiting international trade agreements. Without a doubt these are essential and worthy aims that would improve the lives of millions of people. They also represent the limits of top labor leadership’s imagination: they’re aimed at patching up what’s left of the shredded regime of mid-century, New Deal America.

The labor movement has been functioning in such a hostile climate for so long, its social imagination has atrophied. There are few dreams of liberation; rather too many labor leaders have merely sought to hone their tactics, to play catch up. What would it mean to go on the offensive?

The fact that the national labor movement has honed in on the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) seems indicative of its traumatized state. Certainly, I agree we should go all out to pass it. I have no doubt that the passage of EFCA is essential. Yet even if it were to pass, how much would it change? Myriad forms of employer coercion are still legal. So many jobs and workers are not defined as eligible for NLRA rights—and these tend to be the jobs in growing sectors. Hundreds of thousands of workers lack legal status and live under con-

stant threat of imprisonment or deportation. The right to strike doesn’t really exist anymore; nor does labor seem interested in winning it back. And the labor movement itself is perhaps on the verge of internal civil war. At the start of this political opening, offered by Obama’s election and the economic crisis, the labor movement finds itself erupting in schism—a moment more like 1935 than the First Hundred Days of 1933.

Just as the emergence of the CIO breathed new life into the labor movement in a moment of economic and political crisis, so too do the contemporary conflicts help us glimpse a new kind of labor movement. Indeed, the internal conflicts now taking place within SEIU and UNITE HERE encapsulate the strategic choices confronting trade unionists and their allies. In particular, two strategies emerged over the last decade because no fundamental right to organize existed; these have now run up against each other.

To paint with a broad brush, one strategy models the union along the lines of corporate capital. If employers are organized as huge multi-state or multi-national corporations, not bounded by central worksites or states, then labor has to be organized on similarly large-scale terms: as mega-locals and internationals. Power has to be concentrated at the level of the international union or the union federation (Change To Win), which can see the whole economic landscape from a bird’s eye view and coordinate tactics across far-flung space. Without a right to organize, the international leadership devised a tactic of brokering deals with companies or the state: the employer agrees to a manageable degree of unionization, while the union somewhat unconditionally accepts a nominal “contract.” Where it could, the International used bargaining to organize. Within this model, strikes were seen as unnecessary; what mattered were numbers. The buzzword has been “density” but that’s not really accurate, rather it’s about scope. The actual existence of the union can be thin, as long as its scope is wide. Those numbers (the thousands brought into the union by the brokered deal) can then be translated, according to this strategy, into political clout the International will trade on somewhere else. The labor movement is a political PAC operating at the national level.

The other strategy turned back to the local level to rethink how to build power. Recognizing that collective bargaining in itself was neither sustaining nor increasing the labor movement, local labor activists looked to the community organizing model: organizing outside of a workplace, developing leadership capacity within each person, building community alliances, uniting on issues not in the labor-management contract. It has turned to church meetings and house meetings, public pressure tactics and city council meetings. This strategy has used organizing around community issues, such as medical debt, neighborhood abandonment, bank red lining, and housing to win the right to organize, win new contracts, extend the labor agenda to the broader working-class, and build power from the bottom up. (Some sociologists like to call this social movement unionism but this is both misleading and ahistorical. Both are social movements; and labor has certainly been a social movement in different historical moments.)

Where this model is most successful, it also gets back to

building the union as a real social institution that gives people power on the job (through procedures that workers and management engage in routinely; job stewards; and the right to grieve, arbitrate, and strike), that lets workers define dignity and respect on the job, and has workers participate in bargaining real contracts. New Haven has one of these movements, built through UNITE HERE (actually, HERE) unions. Union organizers and community organizers work together across the realms that define people's daily lives, rebuilding what Rick Fantasia calls "cultures of solidarity." Everyone who is brought into the movement wrote and signed a "Social Contract Between Yale and New Haven." Yes, it's "just" an aspirational platform. But what it does is link the demands made in direct contract negotiations by those within the union with the demands for economic security and control by an even broader range of people in New Haven's neighborhoods. It gives them a platform for organizing together—and bargaining for organizing rights for other workers. California had an even more powerful organization—the Oakland-based United Healthcare Workers West (UHW). UHW used member organizing, elected worker collective bargaining committees, active shop stewards, strikes and militancy, political lobbying days, and coalitions with consumers to win top-notch contracts, organize more workers, and exert county and state-level power. It also enabled workers—especially women, immigrants, and people of color—to shape the union, to define it and use it as a social world that connects them to a broader social project and a political movement. They have a reason and motivation to turn out for political actions. Militant confrontation worked because they had real density: through dense layers of connection and meaning, political relationships, the power to stop work or reshape it. The union has social and political weight.

Although these two strategies on the surface seemed to be complimentary, they had a head-on collision at the very moment Obama took office. After a year-long struggle, SEIU, led by Andy Stern, forcibly took over UHW, its most militant, successful health care local, and set out to break it up. All long-term care workers would be moved out of that local and combined into a state-wide long-term care local, based in L.A., that could claim over 100,000 members. The social world created by the members and their sense of ownership over it did not matter. What mattered was the numbers game as seen from the top. The two strategies no longer co-existed; they are now in outright trench warfare with each other. UNITE HERE! also decided at the same moment to seize one of its "renegade" locals in Detroit. Then Bruce Raynor, UNITE HERE! president, sued his own General Executive Board for actually exerting majority rule. The internal conflict is almost the same: the two adaptive strategies have collided with each other—instead of big capital!

The reality is we need both. We need a labor movement that is a national political voice, that sets out policy and law, and that can achieve legislation for a broad swath of the American public. But, as historians, we know this can only be truly viable if the other strategy is allowed to flourish. People are empowered by their membership in the union not just because some guy in Washington headquarters claims to speak for

them but because they gain control over the currents of their daily lives. They are empowered because they play a meaningful role together in reshaping their social world.

The labor movement can't be a successful political formation without power from below. But it also needs to take on power at the top.

Why is labor seen by most people as just another "interest group"? In part, it's because conservatives have invested a lot in casting labor in the most narrow, self-interested light possible. In part, it's because labor often presented itself that way. But also, it's because most people have very little cultural or social attachment to organized labor.

The auto industry's current fiasco is illustrative. With the hour-glass running out, a desperate General Motors announced its plan on Feb. 18 for the future. What they offered was so pathetic and myopic, it could only leave the public with a sense of disgust. And where was the union? Its lack of vision should be equally distressing. Here's an incredible moment for the UAW to step forward and lay out a bold plan that would benefit the whole country: turn GM into a high-speed train company. Besides offering a possible future, it would give the public a reason to rally around the union.

We glimpsed a possibility of social imagination in Chicago a month after the election, when the mostly immigrant workers at Republic Windows and Doors occupied the factory. Republic was about to leave these UE members high and dry, closing up with a few days notice and no severance pay. When Republic tried to blame Bank of America, the UE swiftly and creatively transformed a small strike into a moment of popular dissent. Tapping into class anger over the Wall Street bail-out, they marshaled popular, media, and political support to shame both corporations. With political backing all the way up to Barack Obama, one local union used militancy to force concessions from corporations.

There are small projects in motion where labor is leading efforts to generate an alternative social vision. UNITE HERE unions in New Haven have initiated a project that brings together New Haven residents (union members and non-union workers, natives and immigrants, youth counselors and artists) around an Economic Blueprint for New Haven. We've launched a Civic Leadership Institute: a multi-week curriculum that teaches popular economics, labor history, civics, immigration myths and realities, and how power works. But at root, it's teaching people how to imagine, or reminding them that they've forgotten that.

Up until now, that is what has defined our political era: we forgot how to imagine. It was a generation-long project of the Right to stop people from imagining. The essence of Right-wing propaganda has been to coerce us to accept that we have the greatest system in the history of the world—indeed, we had arrived at the very "end of history." Fiction and film accommodate this by only imagining the future as dystopic or post-apocalyptic. When was the last time a utopian novel was published? When was the last utopian social theory? It's now the ultimate insult or put-down to call something "utopian."

We are at a unique moment in capitalism. We have to question growth. How do you have prosperity, dignity, and fulfill-

ment, within the new era of using less? There's got to be a social vision of a good life to get there. Labor can't simply tout the old formulas of endless growth anymore. We still could use a labor movement—broadly conceived and broadly created by a whole range of people outside of traditional contracts—that can articulate new meanings of social and economic justice.

On January 20, I attended the inauguration of President Obama in Washington D.C. It was an historic, generation-defining event and somehow I felt, as an historian, I had to be there. What did it feel like? A tremendous sense of collective good will. People knew we're heading into tough, uncertain times but everyone wanted to do something to get us on the road to a better future. Inspired by the political moment, everyone we spoke with seemed eager to be part of a racially egalitarian social project that would shed the nasty taste of the old order and take steps to figure out the new one. Can the labor movement be the vehicle for that?

## LAWCHA Ludlow Committee Wins National Landmark

by Jim Green  
james.green@umb.edu

I am happy to report that last November the Advisory Committee of the National Park Service recommended the Ludlow massacre site and memorial as a National Landmark. This important development was the result of the hard work by LAWCHA's Ludlow Committee, brilliantly and effectively led by Betsy Jameson. (Betsy and I have written an article on the whole project for *International Labor and Working Class History*, which will appear in a forthcoming special issue on *Labor History and Public History*.)

And then, on December 17, 2008, President-elect Barack Obama announced his nomination of Senator Ken Salazar to become the Secretary of Interior, thus virtually assuring that Ludlow would become an NHL. (Salazar and Senator Jay Rockefeller had introduced a bill to calling for the landmark.) But we didn't have to wait for Salazar to take office. On January 15 the outgoing Secretary of the Interior announced the official designation of Ludlow as a national landmark. For the press release: [http://www.doi.gov/news/09\\_News\\_Releases/011609c.html](http://www.doi.gov/news/09_News_Releases/011609c.html)

This positive and yet unpredictable outcome invites reflection on the role that the LAWCHA Ludlow Committee and Betsy Jameson played in this complex process. Our members provided essential historical and archeological expertise to supportive National Park Service personnel, and insured that the perspectives of the United Mine Workers of America (whose president endorsed our effort) and of the strike participants were reflected in the nomination. Committee members negotiated among their own professional assessments of the history, the practical demands of the nomination process (i.e., NPS requirements and deadlines), as well as the urgent expectations of elected officials. LAWCHA committee members can be justly proud that their work and words animate the report, while appreciating the commitment and the talent of Park Service professionals who brought the process to conclusion.



With the support of Senator Salazar and United Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts, local union members, Colorado residents, LAWCHA members and Park Service staff formed a vital collaboration that demonstrated the living significance of Ludlow to American history and collective memory. It is possible that an effort to landmark the Ludlow site would have developed without LAWCHA's initiative, but, at the very least, the association's initiative put the project on a calendar and mobilized the partnerships need to move it forward. It has been our hope that LAWCHA, now larger and stronger than ever, would take the initiative in proposing further collaborations that will make other labor history sites national landmarks.

As readers of this newsletter know, LAWCHA's board of directors voted in June, 2008, to continue the commitment to the work of public memory, and President Mike Honey appointed me to chair a committee to take that work forward. I am pleased to announce that Betsy Jameson has agreed to serve as co-chair and counsel to the committee, which is composed of these fourteen volunteers from LAWCHA's ranks: Camille Guerin-Gonzales, University of Wisconsin Madison, a member of the original Ludlow Committee; Tom Klug, Mary Grove College, member of and liaison to the LAWCHA Executive Committee; Steve Brier, CUNY Graduate Center; Sarah Deutsch, Duke University; Rosemary Feurer, Northern Illinois University; John Enyeart, Bucknell University; Alex Lichtenstein, Rice University; John Lloyd, Cal Poly; Patricia Reeve, Suffolk University; David Bernatowicz, Cuyahoga Community College; Susan Breitzer, University of North Carolina Fayetteville; Robert Chidester, University of Michigan; and Aaron Goings, St. Martin's College.

We, the new "Ludlow Committee," will be "meeting" soon on the internet. I will report on our discussions and proposed activities at the May board meeting in Chicago.

**About the Forum Participants**

**Bill Fletcher, Jr.** is the executive editor of BlackCommentator.com, a Senior Scholar with the Institute for Policy Studies, and a co-founder of the Center for Labor Renewal. He is the immediate past president of TransAfrica Forum and the co-author of *Solidarity Divided*, which analyzes the crisis in organized labor in the USA.

**Jennifer Klein** is Professor of History at Yale University. She is the author of *For All These Rights: Business, Labor, and the Shaping of America's Public-Private Welfare State* (Princeton, 2003).

**Michael Kazin** teaches history at Georgetown University and is a contributing editor of *Labor*. His most recent books are the anthology, *In Search of Progressive America* and *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*.

## The American Right & U.S. Labor: Politics, Ideology, & Imagination

by Elizabeth Shermer and Nelson Lichtenstein

An intense and systematic hostility to trade unionism on the part of American conservatism has been a notable feature of the nation's political landscape for decades. This was the topic of a conference, "The American Right and U.S. Labor: Politics, Ideology, and Imagination," held January 16-17, 2009 at the University of California, Santa Barbara. More than 40 scholars and trade unionists offered papers or comments. The keynote speaker was Fred Feinstein, the NLRB's Clinton-era general counsel, whose 30 years as a Congressional staffer and labor board official gave him a unique vantage point from which to observe the anti-union right and evaluate prospects for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. It will be a huge—but winnable—battle, said Feinstein.

Conference papers covered a variety of topics, including the ideology of laissez-faire during the Gilded Age, Progressive-Era company unionism, the New Deal and its opponents, and the rise of Southern anti-labor politics during the Civil Rights era. The conference concluded with a probing discussion of EFCA with David Brody (UC Davis), John Logan (UC Berkeley), Gordon Lafer (Oregon), Susan Orr (SUNY Brockport) and Catherine Fisk (UC Irvine School of Law).

Among the most stimulating papers was one by Kyle Bruce of the Aston Business School, who argued that historians have too long emphasized the impact of Taylorist production technique, while neglecting the far more efficacious and authoritarian ideas of the Mayoist "human relations" school of managerial ideology and praxis. Jean-Christian Vinel (Université Paris-Diderot) and Joseph A. McCartin (Georgetown) considered the ideas of Sylvester Petro (1917-2007), a libertarian intellectual whose views achieved traction in important 1970s Supreme Court cases. The 1970s brought yet another critique of union labor, when advocates of free trade denounced unions as retrograde, protectionist, and against "progress." But, as Andrew Cohen (Syracuse) argued, unions were thought to be a font of "modernity" during the first decades of the twentieth century, when Republicans competed for the labor vote by arguing for high tariffs as a key to high wages. The New Deal backed both labor and free trade, but the demise of that impulse in the 1970s left the unions vulnerable to the new free trade orthodoxy.

Of course, the right has not always been successful. Legal historian Reuel Schiller (UC Hastings) offered a careful

reconstruction of the 1958 California gubernatorial campaign, explaining why GOP conservative William Knowland's effort to ride a Right-to-Work referendum into the state house failed. Likewise Sophia Lee (Yale Law) found that the National Right to Work Committee's effort to link its agenda to the rights claims of the black freedom struggle in the 1970s failed to win support from the NAACP and other black organizations, but nevertheless put the labor movement on the ideological and jurisprudential defensive.

Political scientist Susan Orr helped conclude the conference with a reconsideration of the NLRB election, a topic now hotly contested in the debate over EFCA. Orr argued that the analogy between a union authorization election and that of a contest for political office is faulty. Rather, NLRB elections have more in common with a constitutional convention or referendum, which lays the foundation for a democratic polity. The secret ballot is therefore but one element, and not always the most important, in a process designed to establish a new governing and bargaining regime.

Other participants included Anthony DeStefanis (Otterbein College), Jonathan Rees (Colorado State, Pueblo), Dolores E. Janiewski (Victoria University of Wellington), Christopher Nehls (Providence College), Jennifer Brooks (Auburn), Michael Pierce (University of Arkansas), Michael Honey (University of Washington), Alexander Gourse (Northwestern), Lisa Phillips (Indiana State), Elizabeth Lamoree (UC Santa Barbara), Todd Holmes (Yale), Dana Frank, (UC Santa Cruz), Shannon Clark (Montclair University), Eduardo Canedo (Princeton), Jennifer Luff, (UC Irvine), John Borsos (United Healthcare Workers West-SEIU), Mel Dubofsky (SUNY Binghamton), Mary Furner (UC Santa Barbara), Alice O'Connor (UC Santa Barbara), Sanford Jacoby (UCLA), Judith Stein (CUNY Graduate Center), Tami J. Friedman (Brock University), Jeffrey T. Manuel (University of Minnesota), Elizabeth Shermer, (UC Santa Barbara), David Witwer (Penn State--Harrisburg), and Larry Richards (Miami University of Ohio). The conference was sponsored by the UC Santa Barbara Center for the Study of Work, Labor, and Democracy, with support from the UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment and the UCSB Interdisciplinary Humanities Center. Elizabeth Shermer and Nelson Lichtenstein are editing a selection of the papers for publication by the University of Pennsylvania Press. Abstracts of conference papers may be viewed at <http://www.ihc.ucsb.edu/rightandlabor/papers.html>.

## 45 Books Nominated for the Taft Prize

by Joseph A. McCartin (jam6@georgetown.edu)

Some colleagues have asked us to include notices of their recently published books in the newsletter. Rather than issuing such announcements when they are called to our attention and missing other worthy books, we have decided to publish annually the list of books nominated for the Taft Prize. This should be a fairly comprehensive list of those books published each year that would be of interest to LAWCHA members. Forty-five books were nominated for this year's prize. The winner will be formally announced at the 2009 LAWCHA meeting in Chicago. This year's prize committee includes: Ileen A. DeVault (Cornell University - ILR School), Jeff Cowie, (Cornell/ILR), Nancy Gabin (Purdue University), Gilbert Gonzalez (Univ. of California, Irvine), and Joe W. Trotter, (Carnegie Mellon). If you wish to have your book nominated for next year's prize, please check guidelines at: <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/taftaward/submissionGuidelines/Nominees>

Adasiewicz, Sue. *Your Papers, Please*. (Crossing Borders) Scholastic, 2008.

Andrews, Thomas G. *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*. Harvard Univ. Press, 2008.

Archer, Robin. *Why is there No Labor Party in the United States?* Princeton Univ. Press, 2007.

Atkins, Joseph B. *Covering for the Bosses: Labor and the Southern Press*. Univ. of Mississippi Press, 2008.

Bacon, David. *Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants*. Beacon Press, 2008.

Barnes, L. Diane. *Artisan Workers in the Upper South: Petersburg, Virginia, 1820-1865* Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2008.

Battista, Andrew. *The Revival of Labor Liberalism*. Univ. of Illinois Press, 2008.

Biddle, Wendy E. *Immigrants' Rights after 9/11*. Chelsea House Publishers, 2008.

Callahan, Richard J. Jr. *Work and Faith in the Kentucky Coal Fields: Subject to Dust* Indiana Univ. Press, 2009.

Cassanello, Robert & Melanie Shell-Weiss (eds). *Florida's Working-Class Past: Current Perspectives on Labor, Race, and Gender from Spanish Florida to the New Immigration*. Univ. Press of Florida, 2009.

Dantas, Mariana L. R. *Black Townsmen: Urban Slavery and Freedom in the Eighteenth-Century Americas*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Dunaway, Wilma A. *Women, Work, and Family in the Antebellum Mountain South* Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008.

Eller, Ronald D. *Uneven Ground: Appalachia since 1945*. Univ. of Kentucky Press, 2008.

Fletcher, Bill Jr., & Fernando Gaspas, *Solidarity Divided: The New Crisis in Organized Labor & a New Path toward Social Justice*. Univ. of California Press, 2008.

Fox-Genovese, Elisabeth & Eugene D. Genovese. *Slavery in White and Black: Class & Race in the Southern Slaveholders' New World Order*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008.

Fraser, Steve. *Wall Street: America's Dream Palace*. Yale Univ. Press, 2008.

Freeberg, Ernest. *Democracy's Prisoner: Eugene V. Debs, the Great War, and the Right to Dissent*. Harvard Univ. Press, 2008.

Frymer, Paul. *Black and Blue: African Americans, the Labor Movement, and the Decline of the Democratic Party*. Princeton Univ. Press, 2008.

Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights 1919-1950* W.W. Norton, 2008

Glymph, Thavolia. *Out of this House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008.

Goldman, Robert M. *One Man Out: Curt Flood versus Baseball*. Univ. of Kansas Press, 2008.

Greene, Ann Norton. *Horses at Work: Harnessing Power in Industrial America* Harvard Univ. Press, 2008.

Hahn, Steven, Steven F. Miller, Susan E. O'Donovan, John C. Rodrigue, and Leslie S. Rowland. *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, Series 3: Volume I: Land & Labor, 1865*. Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Haydu, Jeffrey. *Citizen Employers: Business Communities and Labor in Cincinnati and San Francisco, 1870-1916*. Cornell Univ. Press, 2008.

Jackson, Carlton. *Child of the Sit-Downs: The Revolutionary Life of Genora Dollinger* The Kent State Univ. Press, 2008.

Kelly, Patty. *Lydia's Open Door: Inside Mexico's Most Modern Brothel*. Univ. of California Press, 2008.

Kurashige, Scott. *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles*. Princeton Univ. Press, 2008.

Lewis, Ronald L. *Welsh Americans: A History of Assimilation in the Coalfields* Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Lewis-Colman, David M. *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit*. Univ. of Illinois Press, 2008.

Lipman, Jana K. *Guantanamo: A Working-Class History Between Empire & Revolution* Univ. of California Press, 2009.

Lyons, John F. *Teachers and Reform: Chicago Public Education, 1929-1970*. Univ. of Illinois Press, 2008.

McKivigan, John R. *Forgotten Firebrand: James Redpath and the Making of Nineteenth-Century America*. ILR Press, 2008.-Cornell Univ. Press, 2008.

Molloy, Scott. *Irish Titan, Irish Toilers: Joseph Banigan and Nineteenth-Century New England Labor*. Univ. of New

## Taft Nominees, Continued!

Hampshire Press, 2008.

Montrie, Chad. *Making a Living: Work and Environment in the United States* Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Pastorello, Karen. *A Power Among Them: Bessie Abramowitz Hillman and the Making of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America*. Univ. of Illinois Press, 2008.

Putman, John C. *Class and Gender Politics in Progressive-Era Seattle*. Univ. of Nevada Press, 2008.

Richard, Lawrence. *Union-Free America: Workers and Anti-Union Culture* Univ. of Illinois Press, 2008.

Sharman, Russell Leigh & Cheryl Harris Sharman. *Night-shift NYC* Univ. of California Press, 2008.

Shaw, Randy *Beyond the Fields: Cesar Chavez, the UFW, and the Struggle for Justice in the 21st Century*. Univ. of California Press, 2008.

Smith, Robert Samuel. *Race, Labor & Civil Rights: Griggs versus Duke Power and the Struggle for Equal Employment*



*Opportunity*. Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2008.

Smith, Vicki & Esther B. Neuwirth. *The Good Temp*. Cornell Univ. Press, 2008.

Stowell, David O. (Ed.) *The Great Strikes of 1877*. Univ. of Illinois Press, 2008.

Street, Richard Steven . *Everyone Had Cameras: Photography & Farmworkers in California, 1850-2000*. Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Weiss, Elaine. *Fruits of Victory: The Woman's Land Army of America in the Great War* Potomac Books, 2008.

Wepman, Dennis. *Immigration*. Facts on File, Inc., 2008.

### Not Yet A 2009 Member? Join LAWCHA Today!

Please enter my 2009 membership to LAWCHA, which includes a one-year subscription (four issues) to *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*.

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## Reports from the Grassroots

The following reports from LAWCHA activists detail our members' activities in different parts of the country. We encourage submissions from all members. Send them to Joe McCartin (jam6@georgetown.edu).

### Florida

Robert Zieger  
zieger@ufl.edu



The Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida has begun a project to collect the oral histories of veteran members of the faculty union, the United Faculty of Florida (UFF; NEA/AFL-CIO). The University of

Florida is one of the few members of the Association of American Universities to enjoy the benefits of collective bargaining, which began with the first contract, negotiated in 1976. Members of the graduate seminar of Dr. Paul Ortiz, Proctor Oral History Program Director, are conducting the interviews. Bob Zieger, Emeritus Professor of History and a member of the Program's advisory board, is serving as consultant.

On a different note, the website of the American Labor Studies Center has gathered a number of useful resources on black workers and the labor movement. These can be found at: <http://www.labor-studies.org/blacklabor.php> and include links to works by Mike Honey, Ruth Needleman, and Bob Zieger among others, as well as resources of interest to LAWCHA members.

### Southeastern Pennsylvania

Francis Ryan  
ryan@moravian.edu

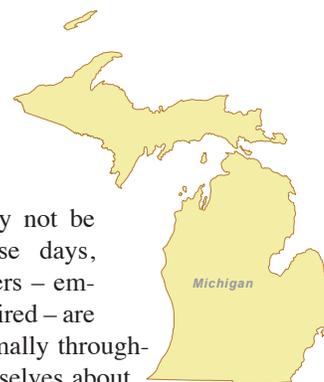
The Pennsylvania Labor History Society (PLHS) held its 34th annual conference in Philadelphia on September 26-27, 2008. The events started off with a celebration of the unveiling of a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission historic marker outside City Hall commemorating the 1938 municipal workers strike that led to the founding of AFSCME District Council 33. About sixty city workers, labor activists and family members of the original strikers came out to honor this important moment of labor history. Among the speakers and performers at the ceremony were songwriter and musician Mike Stout, LAWCHA member and labor historian Francis Ryan, AFSCME DC 33 president Pete Matthews, AFSCME DC 47's Cathy Scott, AFSCME DC 13 Executive Director Dave Fillman, and PLHS president Rosemary Trump. Other dignitaries and labor activists at the event included Thomas Paine Cronin, Pat Eiding, Ed Keller, Jeff Brown, Alice Hoffman and Wendell Young III.

This year's conference presented awards to a number of local Philadelphia labor activists. The William Sylvis Award for Labor Organizing went to Gary Kapanowski of AFSCME Local 1723, who built up AFSCME District Council 47 since

1977 by winning twenty of twenty two union representation elections. Sharing the 2008 award with Gary is International Union of Operating Engineers Local 542's Linda Lyons Butler, whose leadership with the Tradeswomen of Purpose/Women in Nontraditional Work (TOP/WIN) has opened doors for over 1,000 women in the Philadelphia region to get well paying jobs with the building trades. Henry Nicholas, president of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, received the John Brennan Labor Education award in recognition of his lifetime commitment to labor education and his advancing scholarship opportunities for health care and other workers across the United States. Kathy Black was honored with the 2008 Mother Jones Award for her continuing commitment to the rights of women workers on the job, and her activities as president of the Quaker City's chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

### Detroit

General Baker (submitted via Beth Bates)  
justbethbates@gmail.com



Detroit auto workers may not be producing many cars these days, but they are not idle. Workers – employed, unemployed, and retired – are meeting formally and informally throughout the city to educate themselves about their options. The overarching question is “can the auto industry as we know it survive?” The answer depends on settling a multitude of issues that impact on retirees as well as active employees of the United Auto Workers. Because people are living longer and robots do so much of today's work, the UAW has more retired members than active members. Retirees have no voting power at the table, since they are “two steps removed from the bargaining process.” Pensions and healthcare are major concerns of all, issues that raise the question of national health care and the nationalization of the auto industry. The question of the health of the supplier base that all auto companies use is also on everyone's mind.

In order to address these concerns and place the task that lies ahead in some perspective, I will teach a course on “African Americans in Labor History” for the annual Black Men in Unions conference at the University of Michigan in mid-February. I have been a lecturer at this conference for ten years, but I wonder if this will be the last year of the conference. All the instructors work for free, giving students, all UAW members, more than ten hours of instruction over the course of two days. But the enrollment, which normally tops eight hundred, is down to two hundred this year because tuition re-

fund monies have been cut. Understanding the historic juncture we are all in, I have expanded my section on the Great Depression for this year's class. I am going to focus on the Ford Hunger March and the interracial sharecroppers' protest organized by Rev. Owen Whitfield, a black former sharecropper and vice president of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, in southeastern Missouri in 1939. Students will hear from Dave Moore, a participant in the Ford Hunger March, and Quill Pettway, one of the first black tool and dye workers at Ford Motor Company. Both Moore and Pettway are founding members of the National Negro Labor Council and are members of UAW Local 600.

Gen Baker, retired auto worker, founding member of Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, scholar, and lecturer on African American labor history. He can be contacted through Beth Bates at justbethbates@gmail.com.

## Washington State

James Gregory  
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### Governor Proclaims Washington Labor Heritage Year



The new year has brought both good news and new challenges for the labor movement and labor studies in Washington State. The good news is that Governor Christine Gregoire has issued a proclamation declaring 2009 Washington Labor Heritage year

and acknowledging the importance of the many anniversaries that the state's labor movement will celebrate this year. The bad news is that Evergreen State College is proposing the elimination of the Labor Education and Research Center in response to the budget crisis. This is the only LERC in the state and allies are planning a full-fledged fight to save it.

The Governor's proclamation, meanwhile, represents an important opportunity. The declaration was drafted by the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies in cooperation with the M. L. King County Labor Council and the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association. Our friends in the legislature persuaded her to issue the order.

LAWCHA members and labor historians in other states might consider making similar proposals. This sets us up for a year of labor heritage activities that began on February 7 with a program celebrating the 90th anniversary of the 1919 Seattle General Strike. In the months to come we will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Spokane Free Speech Fight, 75th anniversary of the 1934 Longshore Strike, and 10th anniversary of the Battle in Seattle WTO demonstrations.

We are also using the year to raise funds for a Washington Labor Archive to be housed at the University of Washington. Here is Governor Gregoire's proclamation:

WHEREAS, the state of Washington has a unique labor

history that has made it a leader among states in securing workplace rights, in establishing civil liberties, equal rights, and the dignity of all workers, and in recognizing the importance of labor unions; and

WHEREAS, organized labor has been vital to the progress of American democracy, helping to secure not only higher standards of living, but also higher standards of citizenship, giving workers the ability to counter the power of money with the power of many, both in the workplace and in the halls of government; and

WHEREAS, many of the episodes that frame our state's sense of historical identity involve worker struggles and labor issues; and

WHEREAS, 2009 presents the opportunity to acknowledge several important anniversaries:

The Spokane free speech fight of 1909;

The Seattle General Strike and Centralia Massacre, both in 1919;

The Longshore Strike of 1934;

And the 10th anniversary of the Battle in Seattle WTO demonstrations;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Christine O. Gregoire, Governor of the state of Washington, do hereby honor the heritage of the labor movement in our state, and I encourage all citizens to involve themselves in educational activities that foster understanding of the history of working people and the role of labor organizations in Washington State.

## Wisconsin

Andrew Kersten  
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Wisconsin's economy is in shambles, and all workers are suffering. As a recent Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) report stated plainly, "the state's long-term challenges are familiar, daunting, and shared with the nation." "Income inequality, median wage stagnation and a stubbornly persistent poverty rate," the report explained, "are all clear evidence of the disturbing disconnect between economic growth and living standards in the state and nation." The indicators of the scope of the problem are seen in employment, wage, and benefit statistics. Briefly, Wisconsin's economy has been shedding jobs at an alarming rate. Since June 2007, the state has lost more than nearly 30,000 jobs, more than 15,000 in manufacturing. Major firms such as General Motors, M & I Bank, Midwest Airlines, NewPage, and GE Healthcare have announced significant layoffs and in the case of GM and NewPage plant closings. Wisconsin's unemployment rate has spiked to 6.2%, under the national average but not by much. Unsurprisingly, wages have fallen. This decline began in 2006, and workers in the state have not experienced such a sustained downturn since the early 1980s. The loss of income has hit minority workers harder than others, perhaps revealing the continuity of a historic trend during recessions and depressions of the twentieth century. Regardless, the poverty gap between whites

and black is incredibly high. The gap in Milwaukee was the highest among the nation's top 100 cities, and nationally the state itself ranked only behind Minnesota. As incomes and employment levels have declined, so has private sector health insurance coverage. Again, workers at the poverty line have been most affected. Health insurance is connected to only one out every four poverty-wage jobs.

There remains hope that the new legislature with its Democratic majority might be able to swing the resources and regulatory arm of the state government to the side of working families. The Wisconsin AFL-CIO, led by the unflappable David Newby (See "David Newby hopes to lead labor's comeback," *Isthmus* 30 January 2009, <http://www.thedailypage.com/isthmus/article.php?article=24961>) is lobbying hard for an increase in the minimum wage. Additionally, unions are backing a state law that would give paying wages and salaries top priority for companies that declare bankruptcy. If enacted, this law would put workers' claims ahead of bankers' claims for the assets of troubled firms. Finally, there is some talk about making it easier for some classes of state employees to organize unions. And, yet, despite all the pressure, Wisconsinites appear to be playing a waiting game to see what happens in Washington, D.C. The scope of the federal stimulus package as well as the fate of the Employee Free Choice Act will help determine the next steps that unions, activists, and progressive politicians take to reverse the trends on employment, wages, and benefits and to begin to alleviate what New York Times reporter Steven Greenhouse calls the "big squeeze" on the lower and middle classes. But legislation can do only so much. As in the 1930s, perhaps, the onus is on workers themselves to create a new politics and a new economy where economic growth and equity is not—as that recent COWS report notes—"a 'spectator sport' generating gains for the few (and already rich) and leaving everyone else behind."

## Bay Area

Don Watson

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The Bay Area Labor History Workshop (BALHW) Spring season is featuring Gray Brechin on New Deal projects in Northern California; Michael Regan on the 1930s Department Store Clerks Local 1100 in San Francisco; Elaine Elinson on her book on labor civil liberties, entitled "Whenever There's a Fight"; Jo Kreiter of Flyaway Productions, famed for her outdoor Copra Crane dances, on "Dance as an Archival Form"; and Bill Shields of City College on new student labor history projects. The BALHW Annual Dinner on June 11 will feature author, Zeese Papanikolas, on "Representing Labor Militancy." LHW coordinator, Bill Issel, is returning this summer from a Fulbright in Hungary.

The Annual Labor Archives and Research Center Meeting,



led by Director Catherine Powell, is celebrating publication of "The San Francisco Labor Landmarks Guide Book." Archie Green is being honored for his help in promoting this book. A featured speaker is the venerable San Francisco Chronicle reporter and columnist, Carl Nolte. Five walking tours have been devised covering Union Square, South of Market, Waterfront, North Beach, Fishermen's Wharf, and the Inner Mission. Unions are being asked to purchase copies for use at San Francisco conventions.

Also the Southwest Labor Studies Association will hold two one-day conferences this Spring. The Northern California conference will be held at CSU East Bay (Hayward) on May 15 with the theme "Labor at the Grassroots." The Southern California conference will be held on May Day at CSU Dominguez Hills as part of other festivities. SWLSA is also looking forward to another joint conference with LAWCHA within the next few years.

## Alberta

Alvin Finkel

alvinf@athabascau.ca

The Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI), in conjunction with the Alberta Federation of Labour, has produced the first booklet for its series, "The Alberta Federation of Labour, 1912-2012: A Century of Struggle and Solidarity." The booklet is "Spirit of the Crownsnest: The Story of Unions in the Coal Towns of the Crownsnest Pass," by Allan Chambers. Handsomely illustrated, this 24-page booklet tells the story and recalls the miners' words of the struggles of the coal miners in 20th century southwest Alberta and their influence on radicalism throughout the province. Copies can be ordered from ALHI at our website, [www.labourhistory.ca](http://www.labourhistory.ca). The pamphlet series is one of several items that ALHI and AFL are producing together to honour the centennial of the founding of the AFL. Also to be produced are a book on the history of working people in Alberta, and a DVD with vignettes of that same history, as well as a poster series highlighting key developments in working-class history in Alberta.

## **The LAWCHA Newsletter Team**

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**Joseph McCartin** ([jam6@georgetown.edu](mailto:jam6@georgetown.edu))

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**Abby Goldman** ([lawcha@duke.edu](mailto:lawcha@duke.edu))

For submission, please email Joe or Bob.

For additional copies, please email Abby.

# Program Committee Report

by Colleen O'Neill (colleen.oneill@usu.edu) and Dorothy Fujita-Rony (dfr@uci.edu)

As the departing co-chairs of the Program Committee, we wanted to remind LAWCHA members to include LAWCHA as a co-sponsor of sessions you are proposing for academic meetings or public talks you are planning to deliver. Our goal is to promote the study of labor and working class history, and to further build LAWCHA's visibility across disciplines and regions. When your session is accepted, please let the Program Committee Co-Chairs know so that it can be included in the LAWCHA newsletter. Please support your fellow LAWCHA members by attending their sessions at upcoming meetings. We bid you a fond farewell! Here are some up-coming LAWCHA-sponsored panels:

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## LAWCHA co-sponsored sessions 2009 OAH in Seattle

### 1. Friday March 27, 2009, 08:30 AM

#### **Blacks and Latinos/as in the Nuevo South: Race, Labor, and Civil Rights, 1948-Present**

**Chair:** Michael Honey, University of Washington, Tacoma

**Commentator:** Lorena Oropeza, University of California, Davis

**A "Faustian Pact"? Mexican American Workers and Jim Crow in post-World War II Texas, Max Krochmal, Duke University**

**Mexicans, Blacks, and the Agricultural "Migrant Problem" in Georgia, 1970-1996, Julie Weise, Yale University**

**"They Coming to Take Over": Black Poultry Workers' Responses to the Growing Latino Presence in the Industry.**

LaGuana Gray, University of Texas, San Antonio

### 2. Friday, March 27, 2009, 1:45 PM

#### **Pacific Northwest Radicalism**

**Chair:** James Gregory, University of Washington

**Political Culture in the Seattle General Strike, Victoria Johnson, University of Missouri**

**Bloody Sunday: The Everett Massacre of 1916, David Dilgard, Everett Public Library**

**The Unseen, The Unnoticed, and The Secret, Paul Spitzer, Independent Scholar**

**Bloody Sunday: The Everett Massacre of 1916. Melinda Van Wingen, Everett Public Library**

### 3. Friday, March 27, 2009, 3:45 PM

#### **"From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks"**

(A special presentation of Ian Ruskin's one-man multi-media play about Longshoremen leader, Harry Bridges.) Don't miss the LAWCHA reception that follows.

Co sponsors: The Labor and Working-Class History Association; the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association; and the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies)

**Chair:** Vincent DiGirolamo, Baruch College. City University of New York

**Presenter:** Ian Ruskin, The Harry Bridges Project

### 4. Saturday, March 28, 2009 , 01:45:00 PM

#### **Flawed Crusade: The CIO's Operation Dixie**

**Chair/Commentator:** Michelle Brattain, Dept of History, Georgia State University

**Commentator:** Robert Korstad, Duke University

**The Wrong Kind of Protestantism: Religious Activists in the CIO's Southern Organizing Campaign, Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, West Virginia University**

**The Wrong Kind of Protestantism: Religious Activists in the CIO's Southern Organizing Campaign, Ken Fones-Wolf, West Virginia University**

**Organized Labor and Veterans of the Second World War: A Reconsideration of Success and Failure in the Operation Dixie Campaign, Jennifer Brooks, Auburn University**

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## Western History Association October 7-10, 2009 Denver, CO

### **Collisions, Face-offs and Evasion: Borders, Migrants and Labor**

**Chair:** Zaragosa Vargas, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

**Invoking the Transit Privilege: Japanese Immigrant Challenges to the Power of North American Borders to Exclude, Andrea Geiger, Simon Fraser University**

**Migrant Labor and Martial Law in the Great Depression: The 1936 Colorado-New Mexico Boundary Battle , Derek Everett, University of Arkansas**

**"California's Worse Single Road Wreck": The Deaths of Thirty-two Braceros in Chualar, September 17, 1963 , Stella C. Mancillas, UC Davis**

**Comment:** Ernesto Chavez, University of Texas, El Paso

# LAWCHA Forum on Teaching

## Teaching: “Work, Society, and Culture in Modern America”

by Phil Chassler (philip.chassler@umb.edu)

Alternating with two colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Boston, I teach a 300 level course entitled “Work, Society, and Culture in Modern America” in the American Studies Department. A commuter school, UMass Boston draws its over 13,000 students from working class and middle class suburbs as well as from Boston and other nearby cities. Few students come from elite backgrounds, many are the children of immigrants or are themselves immigrants, many are the first in their family to attend college. All told, they are a group enthusiastic about the school and its possibilities for them.

Each of my colleagues has his or her version of the course, but generally speaking, “Modern America” is defined as beginning in the late nineteenth century and extending to the present. “Culture” means pretty much anything not explicitly historical or political, such as fiction, music, visual art. As for work and society, my version of the course has several foci: we look at aspects of the history of working people, of the history of organized labor, of the representation and expression of working people’s lives, as well as aspects of the transformation of jobs and labor over the last century. At the first meeting, in the syllabus course description, I tell the class, “words and phrases such as ‘working class,’ ‘culture,’ ‘class consciousness,’ and ‘class struggle’ are often taken as abstractions with little reference to the realities of everyday life,” and that we will draw “on the evidence of practical experience, to give concrete meaning to these and other terms.” Implicitly or explicitly, we consider such questions as “What is the American working class?” “Can it be easily defined?” “What kinds of work do American workers do?” “What is working-class culture?” “What divides American workers?” “What unites them?” “What do past experiences have to teach about the present?” “What are the prospects for working people in our age of ‘deindustrialization’ and ‘globalization’?”

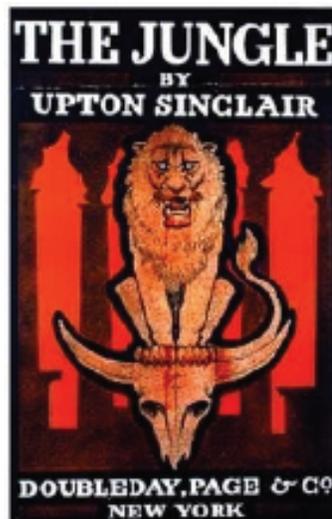
This is an ambitious agenda to be sure, and one that never gets as worked out or goes as far along as I would like. The most difficult lesson concerns defining social class. I find, and not only in this course, students are unlikely to use the term “working class,” let alone identify themselves or their families as such. What is more, students know little, or perhaps better to say, have been taught little, about the labor movement or the history of working people in this country. Al-

though most of my students have jobs, there might be one or two in a class of thirty who belong to a union or whose parents are union people. On the other hand, the course has attracted a few activists---one semester, I was amused to read in the local paper of the arrest of one of them, an IWW member, for “trespassing” in abandoned property with his comrades, another fellow led the campus socialist group ---during a later term one student in the class organized for the student anti-war group. In one class, a Teamster member appreciatively recalled a successful strike at the car rental agency where she worked.

Reading includes James Green’s *The World of the Worker* (Jim is a friend and colleague), Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, chapters from Robin D.G. Kelley’s *Race Rebels*, Chester Himes’s novel *If He Hollers, Let Him Go*, Miriam Ching Yoon Louie’s *Sweatshop Warriors*, and other appropriate articles and chapters. I show several films including PBS documentaries on early twentieth-century immigration to the US and on the UAW sit-down strikes, the first twenty minutes of Chaplin’s *Modern Times*, and all of *Struggles in Steel*, a powerful documentary about racism in the steel industry. There’s music too, Woody Guthrie, Huddie Ledbetter, early Rock and Roll based on George Lipsitz’s chapter on “The Class Origins of Rock and Roll,” hip-hop and “gangsta rap,” based on Kelley’s chapter, “Kickin’ Reality, Kickin’ Ballistics.”

Study proceeds chronologically, so that, for example, Green’s chapter about the “The Company Town and The Urban Ghetto,” accompanies the film about immigration and precedes *The Jungle*. I assign the Norton Critical edition of this novel because it includes essays by Sinclair’s contemporaries and our own about Chicago’s Packingtown, as well as Sinclair’s essays about art and socialism. Assigned at the start of the course, the novel and selected commentary provide the images, the feelings, and the intellectual groundwork for pondering the experiences of immigration and of industrial

work. Along with relevant passages in the novel, the essays become the basis for conversations about aesthetics, “All art is propaganda,” says Sinclair, and for filling a gap in most students’ learning: the various meanings of early twentieth century socialism and its American manifestations. Before the class watches Charlie Chaplin make a farce and a ballet of the assembly line---oh that marvelous, outrageous, automatic feeding machine---they have read Jim’s chapter on “The New Capitalism,” have listened to me comment on his passages about Fordism, and have been asked to ponder questions about how the movie’s technique and comedy might express Chap-



lin's vision of work. Do students get the picture? They don't always laugh--I am not sure why--but many notice right away that the boss is busy working on a jigsaw puzzle. Along with the history, I teach the concepts. They read Kelley's chapters on African-American music, dance, fashion, work, and the fight against segregation (including the eye opener on Birmingham in 1963) after a group presentation (one of six, eight, or ten—depends on class size--throughout the semester) on his use of the concept of the "hidden transcript." After watching in *Struggles in Steel* the heartfelt, indignant yet dignified, sometimes tearful testimonies, of the retired black steelworkers, men and women, about their lives in the "young hell" (as one of them puts it) of the mills, students sit moved and respectfully quiet. This contrasts with Himes's no holds barred novel about black and white workers at an LA shipyard during World War II, a source for sometimes uncomfortable discussion about racism.

Assignments include short essays which ask students to synthesize their understanding of readings, the small group—3-4 students--presentations based on the readings, and a research project which includes a proposal, an annotated bibliography, the paper and an oral report. This can be a highlight. One student had interviewed her uncle, a PATCO striker. Another made much of the working class anger he saw in the film *Fight Club*. A "Powerpoint" presentation on Diego Rivera's Detroit Industry inspired talk about Chaplin's and Rivera's different visions of the assembly line worker. There is always something for the teacher to learn. One student wrote about the hazards of working in nail salons. When another student asked if she could research Native American Residential Schools, I hemmed and hawed, wondering at the topic's relevance to the class, finally saying ok. A few weeks after reading her enlightening paper, I found a review of books on Native American work and assimilation in *Labor* (Spring 2008).

Because *The World of the Worker* ends in 1980, the class is brought up to date with readings by Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone, Kim Moody, Naomi Klein, Andrew Ross, and Michael Yates about the latter day assault on organized labor, the reality behind brand name logos, the illusory creative and casual style that masks the exploitation of internet workers, and the current general condition of the US working class. Miriam Ching Yoon Louie's book about women workers from Mexico, China, Korea, and elsewhere reiterates course themes of migration, racism, sweatshop labor, and the sometimes reactionary role of unions in these matters. Her book brings home in the words of the workers themselves the experience of today's world economy. Louie's emphasis is on organizing beyond unions to within communities, then across communities and borders. That today's immigrant sweatshop workers who, as was Jurgis Rudkis, are exploited by bosses, become warriors, rounds a circle and points to the future for working people, our students.

## Labor History for K-12 Teachers: American Labor Studies Center Provides Curriculum Resources

by Paul F. Cole (paulfcole@aol.com)

According to a poll by Hart Research, 54% of adults said they know just a little or don't know much about unions. They said their chief sources of knowledge were personal experience (37%), people in unions (26%), and the media (25%). Significantly, learning about unions in schools was not even mentioned.

The implications of these numbers are very clear. To a very large degree, Americans are uninformed or misinformed about the labor movement and the role that workers and unions have played – and do play – in our nation's economic, political, cultural and social life.

To address this issue, the American Labor Studies Center (ALSC) was formed in 2002. Its mission is to collect, analyze, evaluate, create and disseminate labor history and labor studies curriculum and related materials to kindergarten through 12th grade teachers nationwide.

There are a wide variety of curriculum materials for teachers of virtually every subject and grade level including historical events, music, art, literature, biographies, simulations, and contemporary issues among others available on the ALSC web site ([www.labor-studies.org](http://www.labor-studies.org)). The ALSC also conducts workshops and sponsors exhibits at various teacher organization meetings.

The Fall 2008 issue of the LAWCHA Newsletter launched a section on "Teaching Labor and Working-Class History" and encouraged members to share ideas. Much of the focus has been on the postsecondary level and that is important. However, there are 3 million teachers who teach 50 million children in our nation's elementary and secondary schools. Almost all of them have had little education about the history and role of the American labor movement and have not had a single source to find high quality teaching materials. Working with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and teacher subject matter organizations such as various councils for the social studies, the ALSC is reaching out to teachers to assist them in preparing and teach-

### About the Teaching Forum Participants

**Phil Chassler** (Philip.chassler@umb.edu) is a Lecturer in the American Studies Department at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

**Paul F. Cole** (paulfcole@aol.com) is Executive Director of the American Labor Studies Center, a former AFT vice president, and Secretary-Treasurer Emeritus of the New York State AFL-CIO.

ing lessons to help students discover the rich history and the variety of activities that reflect the contributions of working people and their organizations.

ALSC's goal is not to indoctrinate or proselytize students but to provide them with an opportunity to explore the many facets of a very complex and important part of America's history and contemporary life. As a result, materials and references for the web site are carefully selected and provide a wide range of resources including lessons, documents and an innovative standards-based instructional unit, "Hardball and Handshakes." The latter was developed by the ALSC and the National Baseball Hall of Fame to use the history of labor relations in Major League Baseball as a case study to help students understand the role of unions in American life.

Teachers are directed to resources such as the "LaborArts" site for cultural resources and the Labor Heritage Foundation where they can order a variety of excellent DVDs, CDs and other items such as the film *The Inheritance* for only \$15. Simulations on organizing a union and collective bargaining are also available for download as are resources for elementary teachers.

The ALSC is located in the Kate Mullany National Historic Site ([www.katemullanyrhs.org](http://www.katemullanyrhs.org)) in Troy, New York. Mullany was a young Irish immigrant who formed and led the nation's first bona fide all women's union – the Troy Collar Laundry Union – in 1864. She was also the first woman to serve as an officer of a national union. The ALSC was instrumental in gaining National Historic Landmark status for the building in 1998 and gaining passage of federal legislation designating it a National Historic Site in 2004.

In addition to housing the offices of the ALSC, the Mullany House has an exhibit area on the first floor currently hosting the exhibit "The Irish and Labor." Plans are in place to restore and furnish Mullany's third floor apartment as it was in 1869 when her family moved in. Plans are also in place to create the "Kate Mullany Park" honoring trade union women



*Kate Mullany House where the American Labor Studies Center is housed in Troy, NY*

pioneers. When completed, the Mullany House will provide visitors, especially students, with an opportunity to learn about working-class life in the mid-nineteenth century and the struggle of workers to organize.

LAWCHA members are encouraged to focus on ways they can help elementary and secondary teachers integrate labor history and labor studies into their classrooms. The ALSC invites recommendations for improving its web site and suggestions for other ways to reach out to K-12 teachers nationwide.

## Welcome to our New Board Members

On March 3, 5 newly elected members joined our board of directors. They are **Randi Storch, Moon-Ho Jung, Laurie Green, Franca Iacovetta, and Lionel Kimble, Jr.** All bring phenomenal backgrounds and interesting ideas to our organization, and we look forward to our work in the coming year with these newest members.

Thank you to our departing board members, who have left our board after three years of excellent service to our organization. They are **Peter Rachleff, Robert Korstad, Camille Guerin-Gonzales, Ileen Devault, and Mary Nash.** Each one added something important and distinctive.

## Call for Nominations

LAWCHA's nominating committee will meet in June to create a slate of nominees for next year's officers and board of directors election. The committee welcomes suggestions for nominees from among LAWCHA's membership. Please send names or self-nominations to **Alice Kessler-Harris (ak571@columbia.edu)**, chair of the nominating committee. A paragraph or so providing support for the nomination would be helpful.

## Call for Panels: 2010 OAH/LAWCHA Conference in DC

The 2010 LAWCHA conference will be held concurrently with the OAH in Washington, DC. We plan to arrange up to ten panels during the conference, which will be held April 7-10, 2010. Please send Kim Phillips (klphil@wm.edu) your proposals as attachments or in the body of email messages. The proposals should include the following:

- 1) A Title
- 2) A description of 500 words or less
- 3) A list of participants with roles clearly stated. In this list please include the names of the participants as they wish to see them in print.
- 4) Email addresses and phone numbers for each participant.
- 5) If available, a 500 word or less CV for each participant (some may already be in our system, so if you want to wait until I ask for them, that's fine).
- 6) Paper titles (if appropriate) and descriptions for the papers of 250 words or less.

## LAWCHA and Harry Bridges at the OAH Seattle From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Dock, Friday, March 27 at 3:45

Mike Honey  
mhoney@u.washington.edu

Harry Bridges, an Australian seaman, led the historic San Francisco waterfront strike of 1934 that unionized the docks. Police killed two strikers during one of the few successful general strikes in U.S. labor history. Bridges went on to lead the Congress of Industrial Organizations on the West Coast. For his pains, the U.S. government spent twenty years and held three different inquests trying to deport him as an "alien" radical. Bridges refused to name names or recant his Marxist beliefs. He went on to denounce the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, to marry a Japanese-American in defiance of miscegenation laws banning interracial marriage, and to demand equal rights for African Americans

and other ethnic minorities on the docks. Bridges voiced criticism of American militarism, racism, and imperialism. His International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) survived the CIO's anti-Communist purge and prospered. It continues today as a powerful exemplar of rank and file, democratic unionism.

This year's OAH will hold a plenary session on Friday afternoon in which Ian Ruskin, a vet-

eran of English repertory theater, will perform his acclaimed one-act play on the life and times of Harry Bridges. The play provides a sharp, spirited perspective on labor issues in the era of homeland insecurity. Baruch College history professor and former San Francisco labor journalist Vincent Di Girolamo will introduce the play and moderate a discussion following the performance. The play and a reception are co-sponsored and partially funded by LAWCHA, the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association, and the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies at the University of Washington. Area unionists have been invited and we hope the events will convey something of the unique flavor of radical labor in the Pacific Northwest. Martin Luther King County Labor Council executive director David Freiboth will welcome us to a friendly Seattle-style reception following Ruskin's play.

In addition, look for the ILWU's dynamic, graphic exhibit of longshore history near the OAH registration desks. And please plan to attend our LAWCHA lunch on Saturday, March 28, at 12:15 p.m. (\$45). UW Harry Bridges Endowed Professor James Gregory will present a slide show and streaming video based on his acclaimed oral history web site, "Teaching a City its Civil Rights History: The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project." See the OAH program pr website (OAH.org) for several other fine LAWCHA-sponsored panels.

At last year's OAH in New York City we held numerous panels, including one on immigrant women organizing and another marking Forty Years Since Martin Luther King and the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike, followed by a wonderful reception. Join us this year at the OAH in Seattle, to help LAWCHA continue to tell about labor's contributions and to celebrate our continuing struggle for a better world.



*Young Harry Bridges*

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